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**NOAA Constituent Briefing**  
**National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2007**  
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**HCHB Room B-841A**

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Thank you all for coming today and for calling in. I am [Bill Hogarth](#) and I am here today to talk to you about the Administration's [2007 National Offshore Aquaculture Act](#), which was sent to Congress Monday for consideration and action.

Sam Rauch will go over the details of the [proposed legislation](#), and highlight the [revisions](#) we made in response to concerns we heard at the Senate hearings last year and in informal discussions with a wide range of constituent groups over the last two years.

What I want to do is share some thoughts with you on why aquaculture – and this bill – is so necessary. As the [Secretary of Commerce announced](#) on Monday, this proposed legislation will reduce impediments to growth in this emerging industry while ensuring stringent environmental protections.

I want to emphasize the environmental protections. NOAA is committed to protecting the oceans and balancing multiple uses. I believe that protecting our marine environment is an absolute necessity. I also believe that ocean and coastal related industries are fundamental to economic growth. With the transmittal of this revised Act, NOAA is sending a clear message that we need an effective management regime to protect the vitality of our ocean resources as we explore this promising avenue of seafood production and greater economic sustainability.

An [earlier version](#) of the proposed legislation back in 2005 was met with some opposition. To those who are skeptical about the revision, I want to assure you that we heard you loud and clear, and we took your comments seriously. We have made the 2007 bill much stronger. If you read the proposal, you will see that we listened to all the concerns and we made changes that address those concerns. Our bill also includes many of the recommendations we have heard in the last two years.

For example:

We took a hard look the recommendations from the recent, [Woods Hole Marine Aquaculture Task Force](#), which Admiral Pittenger led; suggestions presented by states such as [Alaska](#) and [Florida](#); and from the [seafood and aquaculture industries](#). And, we clearly addressed many of those recommendations in our [2007 proposal](#).

We also looked at the California Aquaculture bill; and at the laws already in place in Washington, Maine and Florida.

However, it didn't take long for the chorus of critics to knock our revised proposal. At this point, I would say to them - stop perpetuating the myths and misinformation about aquaculture. We are proposing a careful, thoughtful, workable plan here to slowly introduce this country to one of the most exciting opportunities we've had for seafood production in a long time.

It is clear to me and many, many others that:

- **Fishing and aquaculture are complementary technologies to produce seafood.** This country needs both to meet current market demand and fill future market demand;
- **Innovation is underway in aquaculture.** Technology is advancing at a rapid pace and has already overcome many of the perceived problems of the trade; and

- **Aquaculture will provide more than just seafood.** We can use aquaculture through hatchery enhancement to replenish depleted wild stocks. This will benefit the environment and commercial and recreational fishermen.

Aquaculture is currently a [\\$1 billion U.S. industry](#) and a key area for future sustainable economic growth in the fishing industry.

[Aquaculture produces over half of all seafood production in the world](#) with a value of \$70 billion, yet the U.S. aquaculture industry produces less than two percent of that output.

Right now we import 80% of the seafood we consume. And about half of those imports are from aquaculture operations.

We need to get the word out that aquaculture can be done sustainably, and this legislation will remove roadblocks to allow American technology, investment, and seafood production jobs to stay in the U.S.

Another key issue supporting our need for more seafood, including aquaculture, is the undeniable [linkage between seafood consumption and improved human health](#). Seafood is a great source of lean protein and, according to researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health, even modest consumption of fish and shellfish reduces risk of coronary death by 36%. Our study with the [National Academy of Sciences](#) clearly showed that the health benefits of eating a variety of seafood far outweigh the risks.

By sending this proposal to Congress, we have opened the door to the next phase in this process, and one that includes and encourages plenty of public involvement and oversight. We'll be counting on public involvement throughout every step as we:

- Work with Congress to get the bill enacted;
  - Conduct all the analyses and public comment periods to develop an environmental impact statement and to complete the rulemaking process.
- No permit will be issued until this process is completed.

Whole communities stand to benefit from offshore aquaculture, through the economic ripple effect this new industry stands to create through associated businesses.

Where will aquaculture in the U.S. be in 20 years? We have a choice: If we continue to perpetuate old information and don't find a way to make room for aquaculture, most of our seafood will be imported. That may be okay for many consumers, but coastal communities and ecosystem managers will miss out on a huge opportunity. If we embark on a learning-by-doing approach to develop domestic aquaculture, we're more likely to meet the challenge in this country.

Along with the Secretary of Commerce and the NOAA Administrator, I look forward to working with Congress, and with you, our stakeholders, as we proceed with this initiative in the weeks and months ahead.

Thank you.